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THE

FASHIONABLE PREACHER;

K

OR,

Modern Pulpit Eloquence

DISPLAYED.

Non tali auxilio, nec defenſoribus iſtis
Tempus eget. VIRG.

——— *Pudet hæc opprobria nobis,*
Et dici potuiſſe, et non potuiſſe refelli. OVID.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

FASHIONABLE PREACHER.

THERE is not on earth a character more exalted, or more worthy of ambition, than that of an able ORATOR. To preſide over the human heart, to direct the affections, to regulate the paſſions, to diffuſe life and vigour through the moral world, is an arduous, but a glorious attainment. In an age, when every fine and uſeful art is cultivated with a degree of enthuſiaſm, it is ſurpriſing that ſo manly, ſo uſeful, ſo honourable an accompliſhment ſhould be almoſt totally neglected; and that while Britain can boaſt of ſo many eminent Poets and Philoſophers, it ſhould hardly have given birth to one diſtinguiſhed Orator. It would ſeem, that the Genius of Eloquence had fled theſe happy lands, and bleſt with her preſence a people more careful to improve her divine influences.

There is not a nation in Europe, where public ſpeakers might appear with greater advantage; but there is not a nation in Europe, where they make a more deſpicable figure. It muſt be acknowledged, indeed, that there have appeared many inſtances of a noble emulation to excel in that character at

the Bar, and in the Britiſh Parliament. In the Senate, we meet with ſtrokes of eloquence that would do honour to the moſt celebrated orators of Greece and Rome. There, you may ſee the Patriot plead the cauſe of liberty, with a manly freedom, and with a noble enthuſiaſm. Like the Prince of Orators, he ſeems loſt to himſelf in his concerns for the public: fired with the love of his country, a noble ardour glows in his breaſt; he pours forth a torrent of the bold, the maſculine, the nervous eloquence, that ſeizes, vanquiſhes, and takes forcible poſſeſſion of the heart. At the Bar too, the art of ſpeaking is ſtudied with ſome degree of attention and ſucceſs; there, you may hear the advocate enter into the merits of his client's cauſe with that warmth and ſenſibility, which are the very life and ſoul of an oration: he exerts every power both of mind and body; and ſtrives, as if his own fate depended on the deciſion: and he will often gain the favour of a numerous audience ſtrongly prejudiced againſt his cauſe; and will ſometimes change the ſentiments of a rigid judge, more by the elegance of his addreſs, than by the ſtrength of his arguments.

From theſe inſtances, we may ſee to what a pitch of perfection we might arrive, had we but the ambition to aſpire. We ſee, that eloquence is neither foreign to our clime, nor conſtitution: that learning, taſte, and genius, all conſpire to favour our attempts: that nothing is wanting to complete the Orator, unleſs the Orator be wanting to himſelf.

But if we turn our eyes from the Parliament to the Pulpit; if we turn our thoughts from the Patriot to the Preacher, what a pitiful ſcene preſents itſelf to view! What a poor wretched figure do we make in that character! We ſeem loſt to every ſenſe, I will not ſay of honour and ſhame, but of decency, dignity, and propriety. Our diſcourſes from the pulpit are often too learned and refined for a public audience; often they are mere rant, crude, indigeſted notions, jumbled together without the leaſt regard to propriety and order. In the former caſe, they are ſeldom underſtood for too much ſenſe; in the latter, for too much nonſenſe. Sometimes again the diſcourſes are excellent, and very ſuitable to the occaſion; but they are murdered by a dull, aukward, graceleſs delivery. One cants, and whines, and ſings it away with the greateſt gravity; another bawls out with ſuch a violent vociferation as ſhocks every one, who has the leaſt ſenſe of decorum; a third makes ſuch wry faces, ſuch wild, unnatural geſticulations, as are enough to turn preaching into burleſque; while a fourth, by his cold indifferent manner, preaches the half of his audience aſleep. By theſe abſurdities religion is deeply wounded, and her miniſters expoſe themſelves to contempt and ridicule. Strangers entertain a prejudice againſt our religious aſſemblies; and if they frequent them, it is only to obſerve our faults, and to laugh at our abſurdities. It were well, if ſtrangers only were conſcious of our weakneſs; but the prejudice, like a fatal contagion, has

ſpread among ourſelves; it has taken deep root, and thouſands are infected by its baneful influence. Hence it is that ſo many loiter at home during public worſhip; hence it is that thoſe who attend, often ſit unaffected, and depart unimproved; hence it is that the theatre is crowded, while the pariſh church is almoſt empty.

The reader, I hope, will not take theſe reflections as meant univerſally: there are many clergymen in the church for whom I have the higheſt eſteem, who are an honour to their profeſſion, and an honour to religion. It were to be wiſhed that others would imitate their example, and be at more pains to acquit themſelves with propriety and ſucceſs in that exalted ſtation.

There is a ſet of clergymen whom I ſhall beg leave to diſtinguiſh by the name of FASHIONABLE PREACHERS. Theſe gentlemen ſeem to centre their whole views in themſelves, and to forget the very intention of their ſacred office. Their great ambition is to diſplay their parts and learning to advantage, and to obtain the character of polite preachers among the polite. At all events their diſcourſes muſt be learned, their compoſition elegant, their periods finely turned, and the various parts as nicely adjuſted as a Lady's HEAD-PIECE from the milliner's ſhop. They entertain their hearers with ſome ſpeculative point of orthodoxy, with a clear confutation of ſome heretic or infidel; with a critical diſ-

cuſſion of ſome dubious text; with a curious diſſection of ſome paſſion of the mind; or with a pompous declamation on the nature of ſome virtue or vice. Such diſcourſes may be excellent in their kind: they may do honour to the authors as critics, or philoſophers; but not as preachers: they may pleaſe the fancy and tickle the ear, but they touch not one feeling of the heart: they are no ſooner heard than forgotten; and, "like the baſe-"leſs fabric of a viſion, leave not a trace behind." When Chriſtians aſſemble on ſolemn occaſions, it is not to ſtudy the rules of criticiſm and metaphyſical reaſoning; it is not to learn the profound myſteries of philoſophy, nor the endleſs diſputes of jaring factions. The views of Chriſtians are far more noble and exalted: the object of their purſuit is the knowledge of things that more nearly concern them. They aſſemble to hear the great truths of religion, and to learn the important duties which they owe to God and man; to prepare their minds for the reception of every divine virtue; and to ſtrengthen, by a true devotion, thoſe pious principles, that prepare the ſoul for heaven. A ſubject that tends to promote theſe gracious purpoſes is certainly moſt ſuitable for the pulpit: this is what the preacher ought ſtill to have in view; and the moment he loſes ſight of it, he loſes ſight of his duty.

Religion, I believe, would ſuffer no conſiderable loſs, were philoſophical ſpeculations entirely ex-

cluded from the pulpit. Would her miniſters lay aſide their vain notions of refinement and taſte; would they ſtudy to preach from the heart to the heart; they would much more promote her intereſt in the world. I know nothing, in the preſent age, more unfavourable to pulpit-eloquence than too much refinement. This humour, which is owing to the philoſophical ſpirit of the times, is carried to ſuch an extravagant pitch, that every conſideration gives way to it; and in order to be learned and refined, the moſt neceſſary accompliſhments are altogether neglected.

Nothing is more abſurd, than elaborate, abſtract diſcourſes from the pulpit, becauſe they are ſeldom underſtood by the bulk of the audience; and when they are underſtood, they are ſeldom intereſting, becauſe they are more ſpeculative than practical: they tend not to reform the heart, becauſe they do not affect it; they do not affect the heart, becauſe they are addreſſed to cool reaſon. The Faſhionable Preacher, who addreſſes himſelf to the underſtanding alone, diſcovers his ignorance of human nature. Man is not a mere reaſoning machine, devoid of affection and paſſion; he is compounded of both: nor is reaſon ſo much the principle as the rule of his actions. A wicked man can never be ſo totally loſt and abandoned, as to be altogether inſenſible of the impropriety of his conduct: he knows that vice is contrary to his duty and intereſt; and therefore all

elaborate reaſoning, to ſatisfy his underſtanding of ſuch a truth is uſeleſs, becauſe the diſeaſe does not lie in the underſtanding: the imagination and paſſions are engaged on its ſide; and to theſe the cure muſt be applied. The not attending to this is the cauſe of ſo general a defect in the writings and ſermons of the preſent age. A ſenſible and judicious ſermon on any ſubject of morality may be highly reliſhed by a well-diſpoſed perſon, and may afford him uſeful inſtruction for the conduct of his life: the wicked and profligate may hear it with a certain degree of pleaſure; but it affects not the heart; and till it affect the heart, it will never reform. If a perſon of this character can be affected by any thing, it is by the power of a lively and pathetic deſcription that lays open the avenues of his heart, and traces it through all its windings and diſguiſes; that repreſents his real character in ſo juſt and ſtriking a light, as forces a conviction of its meanneſs and deformity; that intereſts his paſſions by all the motives of love and gratitude, of hope and fear, and by every other motive that religion or reaſon can ſuggeſt.

To preach to the paſſions is the moſt important, as well as the moſt difficult part of eloquence; and the preacher that neglects them can never be ſucceſsful. The paſſions ſtrike a vigour through all our operations: without them a man is ſcarcely awake: exiſtence is inſipid, and the ſcene of the world af-

fects him no more than the fleeting images of a dream. Wisely, therefore, has the Author of our being endowed us with so many various affections and passions, which are the great springs of action, and diffuse light and vigour through intellectual nature.—From these, the Orator derives that impetuosity and vehemence that bears down all before it; by these he obtains an absolute empire over his auditors, inspires them with whatever sentiments he pleases, and obliges them to surrender in spite of themselves. "Man, says Mandeville*, never ex- "erts himself, but when he is roused by his de- "sires; while they lay dormant, and there is nothing "to raise them, his excellence and abilities will be "for ever undiscovered; and the lumpish machine, "without the influence of his passions, may be "justly compared to a huge wind-mill without a "breath of air." "Maxima pars orationis," says Cicero†," admovenda est ad animorum motus, non- "nunquam aut cohortatione, aut commemoratione "aliqua, aut in spem, aut in metum, aut ad cupidi- "tatem, aut ad gloriam concitandos: sæpe etiam a "temeritate, iracundia, spe, injuria, credulitate re- "vocandos."

The prevailing itch for learning and refinement has led our fashionable preachers into another absurdity; and that is the *reading of sermons*. Lest they should err in the pronunciation of a syllable;

* Mand. Fable of the Bees. vol. I. p. 220.

† Cic. de Orat. lib. ii. sect. 82.

leſt they ſhould miſplace a ſingle word in the arrangement; or leſt the run of a period ſhould offend the moſt delicate ear, they will truſt nothing to memory; all muſt be read. Now, it is a certain fact, that the ſame diſcourſe has a much better effect when it is properly delivered, than when it is read; and for very obvious reaſons. In the latter caſe, it is deprived of all that aſſiſtance which the proper modulation of the voice, the features of the countenance, and geſtures of the body are naturally fitted to give it. In theſe, there is a kind of eloquence that is felt and underſtood by all, in regard it beſpeaks the ſenſes, and is the language of nature, and where theſe accompany a good ſermon, it will have all the effect that can be expected from any thing leſs than immediate inſpiration. But when a diſcourſe is ſervilely read, the voice is ſtrained and uniform; the action, if there be any, is aukward and muſt be generally the ſame, whatever be the nature of the ſubject: the reader addreſſes himſelf to his paper, inſtead of his audience; and the drudgery of reading ingroſſes him ſo much, that he can think of nothing beſides. Thus, being deſtitute of that manly freedom and dignity which always commands reverence and attention, no wonder he be heard without regard or eſteem. It is from hence we muſt account for that averſion which the people always had, and always will have to the reading of ſermons. But it is not merely the reading that offends them; it is becauſe the ſermon that is read *loſes its effect*. The people indeed are not

all learned, nor do they all pretend to be judges of learning; but it is equally true, that they know when a diſcourſe is delivered with force and energy; when it is pathetic and affecting; when the preacher ſeems to enter into the ſpirit of his ſubject; and, above all, when it gains admittance into the heart, and begets that temper of mind it was intended to produce: every one muſt know when a certain change is wrought upon his own mind; and when he feels it, when he is conſcious of it, he juſtly laughs at the man who would perſuade him of the contrary.

It has been often and very juſtly obſerved, that the perfection of art is, to conceal art; and by how much nearer any art reſembles nature, by ſo much the more is it perfect in its kind. Of this the antient orators, and after them the eloquent fathers of the church, were extremely ſenſible, and were ever careful to make their words appear to be the immediate expreſſions of their hearts; their harangues, or diſcourſes, had a natural unſtudied air; they appeared not ſo much the effect of the head, as of the heart; they appeared not ſo much the fruit of learning, as of good ſenſe, of inward conviction, and real feeling. In direct oppoſition to this practice of the greateſt orators, our Faſhionable Preacher, who ſets up for the ſtandard of taſte and eloquence, is fond of diſplaying his art, and of making us ſenſible that every diſcourſe is the effect of much labour and ſtudy. He lays open his performance

at large in the face of the whole aſſembly; like a boy at ſchool, he reads and blunders, and blunders and reads: he ſtands in the pulpit like a ſpeaking ſtatue, without life and motion; his eyes are fixed down to the ſpace of a few ſquare inches, as if he ſtared at a ghoſt: he hangs his logger-head over his dirty ſcroll, like a thief receiving ſentence of death. If the poor drudge could look around him, he would ſee the half of his audience dozing over his dull repetition; not a ſoul affected, unleſs perhaps an old beggar gives a groan from a dark corner when he hears the ſound. An honeſt countryman happening to hear one of theſe paper-geniuſes preach, was aſked by his wife, when he went home, how he liked the preacher: "Alas! ſaid he, "he was a poor preacher, as ever I ſaw, woman: "he was juſt like a crow picking the corn; for "he always put down his head for a pick, and "then looked about to ſee if any perſon was coming "near him."

The people in this country diſcover a juſt taſte for eloquence, when they prefer a ſermon from a poor illiterate ſtroller, who, perhaps, a few days ago threw by his awls and turned preacher. Your gentlemen of a philoſophic turn, and a refined taſte, may contemn their choice; but their choice is founded on reaſon: and whatever be their learning, their taſte for eloquence, at leaſt, is finer than theirs who pretend to laugh at their ſtupidity. The fanatic who mounts his ſtool in a corner of the

ſtreets, and draws after him the admiring crowd, though he knows little about philoſophy and fine compoſition; though, perhaps, he can hardly read his Bible, yet he has more of the orator than a thouſand graceleſs readers: he addreſſes his audience with ſerioufneſs, with a manly freedom, and with a degree of dignity; he immediately engages their attention, enters into the ſpirit of his ſubject, and preſſes home his exhortations with force and energy. His ſermon is more ſerviceable to religion and virtue, it is better calculated to affect and to mend the heart, than if it contained the moſt critical reaſoning, and the profoundeſt myſteries of philoſophy. What though he ſometimes place the accent on the wrong ſyllable, or the emphaſis on an improper word? What though the periods be not all equally ſoft and flowing; or though, in the warmth of devotion, he may drop even a weak expreſſion? Surely they muſt be poſſeſſed of narrow ſouls, who think ſuch eſcapes are worthy of their notice: theſe were common to the greateſt orators; they thought ſuch negligence was very natural, and ought even to be admitted to avoid the appearance of art. It is the privilege of a great genius to overlook trifles, and to tranſgreſs the ſcanty rules of the critic, when nothing can bound the vaſt conceptions of his mind; when his imagination is upon the ſtretch, and graſping at ſome idea aſtoniſhingly great. A ſublime eloquence is the offspring of nature, not of art: it is negligent of all the leſſer graces, and perfectly conſiſtent with a

certain noble diſorder. The moſt excellent originals produce abundance of thoſe little inaccuracies; and they who aſpire at what is truly great, will not regard ſo much the trifles which can only amuſe incompetent judges.

Sunt delicta tamen, quibus ignoviſſe velimus,
Et ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura.——*

Had Demoſthenes, like our faſhionable Preachers, read his famous orations, what effects would they have produced? Would ſuch a practice have been better reliſhed by the polite Athenians, than by the moſt ignorant audience in Britain? Certainly much worſe. But inſtead of reading his diſcourſes, we have reaſon to believe that he did not even get them ſervilely by heart: they diſcover not ſo much the accuracy and politeneſs of an author, as the ſublimity and vehemence of a great genius, who ſpake from the immediate feelings of his heart, and loſt himſelf in his concern for the public. We often find Cicero, in the very middle of his harangues, artfully introducing circumſtances which chance ſeemed to throw in his way; or taking notice of ſome immediate appearance, or accident, which it was impoſſible to have foreſeen. Nothing ſo much diſcovers the Orator's addreſs, and nothing has a happier effect than ſuch reflections when ju-

* Hor. de Arte Poet. ver. 347.

diciouſly introduced: they rouſe the attention of an audience; they powerfully affect the imagination, and leave the moſt laſting impreſſion on the mind. The advantages ariſing from ſuch a manly delivery are obſerved by Fenelon, in his dialogue concerning eloquence. "A ſkilful Orator (ſays "that pious and ingenious author) adapts things "to the capacity of his hearers, and varies his "diſcourſe according to the impreſſion he ſees it "makes upon their minds. For he will eaſily per-"ceive whether they underſtand him or not; and "whether he gains their attention and moves their "hearts: and, if it be needful, he reſumes the "ſame things in a different manner, and ſets them "in another light: he clothes them in more fami-"liar images and compariſons: or he goes back "to the plaineſt principles, from which he gradu-"ally deduces the truths he would enforce: or he "endeavours to cure their paſſions that hinder the truth from making a due impreſſion. This is the true art of perſuaſion: and without this addreſs and preſence of mind, we can only make fruitleſs and roving declamations."

It is eaſy to perceive, that this addreſs, this preſence of mind, as Fenelon calls it, is as incompatible with *reciting* as with *reading*. He who gets every word of his diſcourſe by heart muſt be a ſlave to his memory, as he who reads it muſt be a ſlave to his paper: in the one caſe, the care of reading, and in the other, the care of recollecting, will ſel-

dom permit the ſpeaker to mind any thing elſe. Hence he deprives himſelf of thoſe happy thoughts that often riſe in the mind during the devout fervour that animates him; and of thoſe pertinent and ſtriking expreſſions which he could not diſcover by the dint of ſtudy. A young man, in his firſt attempts, may find himſelf under a neceſſity to get every word of his diſcourſe exactly by heart. In ſuch a public capacity, it is ſome time before he can acquit himſelf with freedom and eaſe. He is often ſubject to ſuch anxiety and fear as prove too powerful for reaſon, confound his thoughts, and leave him bewildered in a world of perplexities: but no ſooner is he maſter of himſelf, and of his ſubject, than he ought to fall from ſuch a practice, to give a fuller ſcope to his genius, and a freer range to his thoughts. By this means his acquired accompliſhments will ſoon become natural and eaſy, and the powers of his mind, by a free exertion, will every day acquire new ſtrength and vigour.

In proſecuting this ſubject a little farther, we may take notice, in the next place, of *clerical lazineſs*; for, among the cauſes that may be aſſigned for reading ſermons, and for the decay of pulpit eloquence, this, I preſume, has no inconſiderable ſhare. Without application and diligence no man becomes great or eminent in any profeſſion; and of all profeſſions that of a Preacher is the moſt unfavourable to ſloth and indolence. To be properly

qualified for the Pulpit, and for being eminently uſeful in that ſphere of life, requires uncommon endowments, and unwearied application to cultivate and improve them. To many, it may ſeem an eaſy matter to preach; and indeed, the methods they take are attended with no great difficulty. Some, from a common-place book, will patch up a tolerable ſermon in half an hour; others are prepared for Sunday by reading over a ſermon of Tillotſon. There is no occaſion to ſtudy a lecture; Henry and Pool are inexhauſtible ſources. Theſe clergymen, it muſt be owned, are ſeldom guilty of reading, for they ſeldom take the trouble to write. Our faſhionable Preachers, of the lazy order, purſue a plan very different from both the former. They ſcorn to ſteal from the reverend Biſhop, and the thoughts of Henry and Pool, if not too orthodox, are at leaſt too mean and groveling: they are at all due pains to compoſe a neat diſcourſe; but when once it is compoſed, they trouble themſelves no more about it. Some of them are ſo indolent that they will hardly look over what they have compoſed; ſo that often in the Pulpit they are extremely puzzled to read what they have wrote. It muſt be owned, there is ſome excuſe for lazineſs in a clergyman, when once he is fattened to a certain degree, and confined to an eaſy chair; but it is unpardonable in a young fellow, who is neither encumbered with a benefice, nor an enormous belly.

A ſhoe-maker is at more pains to fit a ſhoe to the

laſt; a taylor is at more pains to fit a coat to the back, than many of our preachers to fit themſelves for the pulpit. The advocate, who pleads at the bar, is aſſiduous in acquiring every neceſſary accompliſhment: he ſpares no pains to qualify himſelf for his profeſſion; he is not barely ſatisfied with compoſing what he is to ſay; he commits it to memory, and ſtudies how to deliver it. Why is a lawyer at more pains to acquit himſelf decently than a preacher? Why is he who pleads for the temporal concerns of men more ſolicitous for his cauſe than an advocate for religion and virtue, who undertakes the cauſe of their immortal ſouls? What immenſe pains do players take to prepare themſelves for the ſtage? Though all be fiction; though they have nothing in view but to pleaſe and amuſe us, they practice, they rehearſe, they act their parts over and over before they appear in public; and by acquiring a proper delivery, we ſee what great effects they are capable of producing. How does an able actor by turns, alarm and ſoothe, inflame and melt, torture and tranſport a numerous and mixed aſſembly! He reigns over the paſſions with abſolute ſway, and governs at pleaſure the human heart. If you read a good tragedy to a ſimple clown, who has juſt learning enough to underſtand it, you will perceive him a little affected perhaps at the recital of ſome tender or moving ſcene; but his feelings are weak, ſuperficial and tranſient. Conduct the ſame clown to the Theatre, where he is not only a hearer, but a ſpectator, where he ſees every character duly ſup-

ported, and the whole tragedy exhibited to the life: then how is he moved! how is he toſſed and agitated! how great his tranſports! how great the emotions of his ſoul! now he turns pale with fear, and now he is tranſported with a dawn of hope; anon he is melted with a generous ſympathy, and in a moment he flames with a noble indignation; he forgets himſelf, and is juſt ready to ruſh forward to relieve the ſufferer, and to avenge the cauſe of virtue in diſtreſs.——Thus we ſee the mighty importance of a proper delivery; and, indeed, it is indiſpenſibly neceſſary in every public ſpeaker: no accompliſhments can ſupply the want of it, though it often conceals very great defects, and ſets a preacher of no great parts above thoſe of the greateſt: it has a ſecret charm that amplifies ſentiment, and, like the light and ſhade of a maſterly picture, gives life and meaning to the whole performance.

There is doubtleſs a wide difference between the manner that ſuits the Theatre, and that which becomes the Pulpit:——The former is more bold, more diverſified, and more violent than the latter, as it admits of a much greater ſtrength, and variety of paſſion: ſometimes the former muſt riſe to rage and fury, ſometimes ſink into a comic low ſtrain; in the latter, both theſe would be equally extremes. I am no admirer of theatrical airs in a Preacher: there is a ſolemnity and a ſanctity of manner from which the Pulpit ought never to depart. But as little

do I admire the Preacher who can deliver the moſt moving ſermon without the leaſt emotion; who can talk of the moſt ſtupendous and venerable objects of religion, and of the moſt awful realities of another world, without changing a feature of his countenance, and without moving a joint in his body.

The *great contempt* which Faſhionable Preachers entertain of the people, may be aſſigned as another cauſe for the decay of pulpit eloquence: they deſpiſe their ſentiments and opinions, and conſider them as a multitude of ſtupid prejudiced mortals, beneath their notice and regard. Hence we may account for the greateſt part of thoſe diſorders that prevail in our Church, and prove ſo unfavourable to religion and virtue. But were they to conſider themſelves, as often as they ſpake in public, as appearing before a tribunal where the people were the judges, that the judgment they paſſed would certainly be juſt, becauſe they judge by the effect, which is the only teſt of eloquence; is it to be doubted that the conſequence would be favourable? Such a perſuaſion would rouſe them from that ſloth and indolence into which they are ſunk; it would kindle in their breaſts a laudable ambition; it would inſpire them with a noble emulation. Eloquence would raiſe its dejected head; it would flouriſh; its effects would be great; its power would be felt and acknowledged by all. The theatre, and places of public entertainment, would be leſs frequented;

and the churches, that are almoſt empty, would be crowded with multitudes.

The people at Athens and Rome were always allowed to be judges of an orator's merit; and we find that their judgment was always juſt. The moſt celebrated orators in theſe republics conſidered them as a tribunal inacceſſible to favour but through merit; and they paſſed a ſentence from which there was no appeal. When the great Demoſthenes failed in his firſt attempt, and perceived that his harangues had not the deſired effect, he never dreamed that it was owing to the ſtupidity or to the prejudice of the people: he took it for certain, that the fault muſt be in himſelf; and he never reſted till he found it out, and corrected it. It was by this means he became ſo great, that he was never ſurpaſſed in antient, nor equalled in modern times; it was by this means that he arrived at ſuch a degree of perfection that his eloquence became irreſiſtible: it moved, it toſſed, it agitated whole aſſemblies, the politeſt that were in the world: it made tyrants tremble; it ſhook the thrones of mighty monarchs; it commanded all Greece. From the moment the people heard it, they were no longer their own; the Orator took immediate poſſeſſion of their hearts, and, by the magic power of his eloquence, wrought them into whatever form he pleaſed. Mankind are the ſame in every age, and in every nation; they have the ſame paſſions, the ſame feelings, the ſame affections; and as long as human nature continues

the ſame, the man who ſpeaks to the heart will always be eſteemed and admired. It is well known, that the people in this iſland are never wrong in their opinion of an orator's merit, and wherever their intereſt prevails, the moſt accompliſhed is univerſally the object of their choice. Inſtances of this will readily occur to every reader: he will perceive that it is not the cold, dull, heavy preacher, who is the favourite of the people; it is the man of addreſs, it is the man who is animating, pathetic, and affecting; in a word, it is the Orator. Obſerve where the churches are crowded; obſerve the preacher who draws after him the admiring crowd; obſerve the clergyman who, by a popular call, is tranſported from one church to another, and you will always find the obſervation hold. It is not long ſince the merit of a clergyman * engaged the attention of the public, drew him from obſcurity in Scotland, and procured him a living in the capital of Great Britain. Every one knows how the famous Whitefield was admired by the people; and every one muſt allow him to have poſſeſſed, in a very eminent degree, all thoſe accompliſhments that form the Orator: and, without regard to his principles, he was an honour to his profeſſion as a preacher; and his eloquence has raiſed a monument to his praiſe that will perpetuate his name to lateſt poſterity.

On the other hand, how contemptible do many of our preachers appear in the eyes of the people,

* Dr. Fordyce.

and with what violence do they often oppoſe them? This oppoſition, this ſtruggle between the clergy and the people has made a mighty buſtle all over Britain; it has long engaged the attention of the public: it has generally been imputed to the prejudices of the people, but the defects of the clergy will better account for it. Wherever an oppoſition prevails you will always find the candidate deficient in ſome eſſential point: whatever qualifications he can boaſt of, however vaſt his genius, however great his learning, however refined his taſte, he is not the preacher. Either he reads his diſcourſes, which, as I ſhewed already, is incompatible with the ſpirit of eloquence; or his delivery is ſo wretchedly bad; he expreſſes himſelf in ſuch a cold, dull, lifeleſs manner, that his diſcourſes, however good, are loſt upon the audience; or, laſtly, he is one of your geniuſes who labours in fine-ſpun metaphyſical eſſays, which the people do not underſtand. Theſe great defects, theſe groſs improprieties appear ſtriking to the moſt ignorant clown. The people, with one voice, exclaim againſt the candidate, and reject him with ſcorn. Perhaps they have no objection to his principles, to his practice, or to his learning; but they reject him becauſe he never learned to preach ſo as to profit and edify. Their remonſtrances, however, avail them nothing. The clergy make no ſcruple, (for ſome men have conſciences that will ſtretch like a piece of raw leather;) the clergy, I ſay, make no ſcruple to declare him qualified for that important office, and he

is ordained, in a very ſolemn manner, to preach every Sabbath to his Lordſhip's domeſtics, the bellman and his dog. Happy for the poor people that they live in a land where they can think and judge for themſelves; where they can ſpurn the yoke which their ſpiritual guides would lay upon their necks; where they can deſpiſe thoſe petty tyrants who would lord it over them with all the inſolence of prieſtly pride.

The tyranny of the church of Rome, is not half ſo intolerable as the tyranny of the Eſtabliſhments in this country: the former tyrannizes over a parcel of ſlaves, ſo accuſtomed to a ſpiritual yoke, that they are inſenſible of their bondage; they are rather willing than reluctant ſlaves: the latter tyrannize over a free people, who ſpurn at every kind of ſlavery, and ſcorn that inglorious yoke under which their prieſt-ridden anceſtors groaned. The former impoſes upon a poor deluded people, who are ſunk in ignorance, and blinded with ſuperſtition: the latter would impoſe upon a wiſe and knowing people, who, in ſpiritual as well as in temporal affairs, can think and judge for themſelves. And pray, is the impoſition more ſcandalous and bare-faced to tell a Roman-catholic that a wafer is a part of a human body, than to tell a Proteſtant that he can be profited by a preacher, when he knows, by experience he cannot? An attempt to impoſe upon the underſtanding is, at leaſt, as unpardonable as

an attempt to impoſe upon the ſenſes. It is ſurprizing to ſee men, who are born in a land of liberty, diſcovering the moſt tyrannical diſpoſitions; and ſtill more ſurpriſing to ſee philoſophers, who pretend to be free enquirers, and recommend a free enquiry to others, yet exact the moſt blind and implicit obedience. But it has always been a principle of prieſt-craft to exerciſe authority with the utmoſt rigour; and when ſordid views or a luſt for dominion prevail in the heart, theſe ſpiritual guides degenerate into the worſt of tyrants.

Is *he* a lover of mankind, or dwells there a ſpark of humanity in *his* breaſt, who takes every opportunity to diſtreſs a helpleſs people, to diſappoint their hopes, and to render them as miſerable and as wretched as poſſible? Who glories in impoſing upon them a uſeleſs paſtor, the greateſt misfortune that could poſſibly befall them? Or dares he pretend to be a friend of religion, who acts directly in oppoſition to its intereſt, and labours to render the very character of a clergyman diſgraceful? Is he not juſtly deſpiſed by every good man, who inſtead of endeavouring to mitigate thoſe laws that are ſo fatal to the peace and proſperity of the church, enforces them with the greateſt rigour, and endeavours to make them as grievous as poſſible? Ye proud over-bearing tyrants, who ſtruggle to pull down that glorious fabric which your anceſtors reared at the hazard of their lives, and purchaſed with the price of their blood; ye ungenerous ſouls,

who take pleaſure in diſturbing the peace of the church, in ſowing the ſeeds of faction, in ſetting up the father againſt the ſon, and the ſon againſt the father; behold the fruits of your doings, the monuments of your unwearied zeal! See to what ſhifts, to what trouble, to what expences ye have driven an oppreſſed people! And what is your reward? To live deſpiſed, and to die unlamented. Is this, think ye, the language of a bigot? Are theſe the ſentiments of a wild enthuſiaſt? No; it is the language of humanity: they are the ſentiments of every generous Briton, of every man who wiſhes well to ſociety; they are the expreſſions of a heart that feels for the diſtreſſes of a poor deſpiſed and oppreſſed people. What do we owe to thoſe worthy few (nay, charity ſays they are many) who generouſly oppoſe this ſpirit of deſpotiſm? The church has yet her patriots as well as the ſtate, men who have her intereſt warmly at heart, men who ſtudy her proſperity, and dare to ſtand up in her deſerted cauſe. Honourable indeed, to be an advocate for religion and virtue! nor is it to be wondered that ſo good a cauſe ſhould inſpire them with an eloquence that has often ſilenced, and often confounded their adverſaries. Go on, ye patrons of liberty, deſpiſe the reproaches of the thoughtleſs, the diſſipated, the ſordid, the ungenerous ſoul; ye will ever have the love and eſteem of the virtuous and good; their approbation is only worthy of your ambition.

It were to be wiſhed that the conſtitution of our church was more friendly to merit; and that the Great, who have favours to beſtow, would confer them oftener on the moſt deſerving: it would have a happy influence; it would rouſe every candidate for the church to a vigorous exertion of every power of body and mind. It muſt be owned, however, that though patronage is ſo unfriendly to eloquence, the moſt accompliſhed preachers generally enjoy the beſt livings, and hold the firſt rank amongſt the clergy. It often happens indeed that favour triumphs over merit; and you may ſometimes ſee a benefice beſtowed upon a gentleman who in reality can neither preach nor pray. But what are the conſequences? Every way diſagreeable. Senſible that they can reap no benefit by his miniſtry, the people try every means to diſappoint his views. They pry into every ſecret action of his life; they expoſe to the world his weakneſſes, and often bring to light the folly of an unguarded moment, that otherwiſe had remained in eternal oblivion; for charity will cover a multitude of ſins. And, alas! to enjoy a ſcanty ſuſtenance with the curſe of a poor diſappointed people; to drag out the remains of life deſpiſed, and hated by all around, is worſe than death to a worthy man. The love and eſteem of mankind is one of the greateſt ſources of human happineſs; and it is hard to purchaſe a livelihood at the expence of it. Add to all this the contempt to which the conduct of ſuch a clergyman expoſes religion. When, for a piece of bread

he overlooks the moſt important conſiderations, and ſeems to have nothing in view but ſordid intereſt: he brings a ſtain upon the character, and raiſes ſuch a prejudice againſt himſelf and his doctrine, as for ever blaſts his hopes of doing good. Theſe conſiderations are ſufficient, one would think, to work upon any mind in the leaſt ſuſceptible of good impreſſions.

What pity it is, that the diſciples of that Divine Teacher, "*who ſpake as never man ſpake*," ſhould not labour to acquire thoſe amiable accompliſhments, which give life and meaning to all their addreſſes. When a Preacher appears to be in earneſt himſelf; when he delivers a good ſermon with a becoming dignity and freedom, it ſeldom fails to make its way to the heart, and by the Divine bleſſing to make a deep and laſting impreſſion. Let us only imagine, that we diſcern the ſucceſſive images of truth and virtue riſing in the countenance of him who addreſſes us, and ſee the awfulneſs of religion ſweetened by the mildneſs of charity and love; that we behold his countenance glow with the raptures of a true devotion, or ſadden with ſorrow at human miſery, or brighten into joy and gladneſs at the ſeveral inſtances of truth and virtue, to be found among mankind: can we behold theſe unpremeditated diſcoveries of his heart, and not feel our own glow with a ſympathetic ardour? When religion is turned into a kind of reality: when ſhe appears, in ſome ſort, viſible to mortals: when ſhe is beheld, as

it were, breathing, moving, and acting in all her native beauty and excellence, is it poſſible for a heart, at all ſuſceptible of good impreſſions, not to be charmed with love, or awed into veneration?

Methinks I ſee the good man in the Pulpit, poſſeſſed with the ſpirit of his ſubject, and labouring under the weight of thoſe conceptions which it tends to inſpire:

> As when of old ſome Orator renown'd,
> In Athens, or free Rome, where eloquence
> Flouriſh'd, ſince mute, to ſome great cauſe addreſs'd,
> Stood in himſelf collected: while each part,
> Motion, each act, won audience, e'er the tongue—
>
> PARAD. LOST.

The dignity of his deportment, at once commands reverence and attention. The audience hang upon his lips. An awful ſilence reigns through the whole aſſembly. He looks round him with complacency, and rejoices in the opportunity of doing good. Every ſentiment he utters, like a reſponſe from the ſanctuary of God, makes a deep impreſſion on the heart. He is not ſolicitous about affected ornaments of ſtyle, and a gaudy pomp of words: his thoughts are engroſſed with the ideas of an eternal world, and the great concerns of immortal ſouls. His tender regard for the flock entruſted to his care, renders him the object of univerſal affection, and begets the higheſt confidence and eſteem.—And hence his labours are bleſſed with moſt eminent ſucceſs.

We will conclude this eſſay with the character of the *True Clergyman*, as drawn by that Right Rev. Father in God, Biſhop BURNET.

"A Clergyman, by his character and deſign of life, ought to be a man ſeparated from the cares and concerns of this world, and dedicated to the ſtudy and meditation of Divine matters. Whoſe converſation ought to be a pattern for others; a conſtant preaching to his people: who ought to offer up the prayers of the people in their name, and as their mouth to God; who ought to be praying and interceding for them in ſecret, as well as officiating among them in public: who ought to be diſtributing among them the bread of life, *the word of God*; and to be diſpenſing among them the ſacred rites, which are the badges, the union, and the ſupports of Chriſtians. He ought to admoniſh, to reprove, and to comfort them, not only by his general doctrine in his ſermons, but from *houſe to houſe*; that ſo he may do theſe things more home and effectually, than can be done from the Pulpit. He is to watch over their ſouls, to keep them from error, and to alarm them out of their ſins, by giving them *warning* of the judgments of God; to viſit the ſick, and to prepare them for the judgment and life to come.

"This is the *function* of a *Clergyman*; who that he may perform all theſe duties with more advantage, and better effect, ought to behave himſelf ſo well, that his own converſation may not only be without *offence*, but be ſo *exemplary*, that his people may have reaſon to conclude, that he himſelf does firmly be-

lieve all thoſe things which he propoſes to them; that he thinks himſelf bound to follow all thoſe rules that he ſets them; and that they may ſee ſuch a ſerious ſpirit of devotion in him, that from thence they may be induced to believe, that his chief deſign among them, is to do them good, and to ſave their ſouls; which may prepare them ſo to eſteem and love him, that they may not be prejudiced againſt any thing that he does and ſays in public, by any thing that they obſerve in himſelf in ſecret. He muſt alſo be employing himſelf ſo well in his private ſtudies, that from thence he may be furniſhed with ſuch a variety of *lively thoughts*, divine meditations, and proper and *noble expreſſions*, as may enable him to diſcharge every part of his duty, in ſuch a manner, as may raiſe not ſo much his own reputation, as the credit of his function, and of the great *meſſage* of *reconciliation* that is committed to his charge: above all ſtudies, he ought to apply himſelf to underſtand the Holy Scriptures aright; to have his *memory* well furniſhed that way, that ſo upon all occaſions, he may be able to enforce what he ſays out of them, and ſo *be an able Miniſter of the New Teſtament.*"

Whether the FASHIONABLE PREACHER of the preſent day anſwers the character here drawn by that venerable Father, is left to the ſober deciſion of the candid and judicious.

26 JY 66

FINIS.